

foundry
Hight and MacMurphy (Lombard Ironworks and
Supply Company), 1852
636 11th Street
Augusta
Richmond County
Georgia

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HIGHT AND MACMURPHY (LOMBARD IRONWORKS AND SUPPLY COMPANY)

HAER GA-10

Location: 636 11th Street
Augusta, Georgia
Richmond County
UTM:
Quad:

Date of Construction: c. 1852 (original structure)

Present Owners: Clarence Mobley Construction Company
610 11th Street
Augusta, Georgia

Present Use: Fabrication of steel for bridges as part of
the Augusta Iron and Steel Works, Inc.

Significance: This foundry and machine works was the third
such operation to be established on the second
level of the Augusta Canal. It gradually grew
in size under several different proprietors
until George R. Lombard merged several opera-
tions into the Lombard Iron Works and Supply
Company. This establishment became Georgia's
and also one of the nation's largest such
operations at the turn of the century.

Historian: Robert C. Jorgensen, 1977

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HIGHT AND MACMURPHY

J. T. MacMurphy established a foundry along the Augusta Canal at 11th Street in 1852, and the business was conducted as Hight and MacMurphy until the name was changed to the American Foundry in 1859. [1] The firm manufactured all types of iron and brass castings for gold mines, mills, railroads, bridges, and machinery of all descriptions. [2] By 1861 the business was known as William M. Hight and operated as an ironworks and car factory. [3] Lufburrow and Timmons purchased the industry c. 1865, and by 1867 Timmons operated it by himself, employing a man named Neal as superintendent. [4] Its name was then the Forest City Foundry. Later that year, Neal and a man named Hughes purchased the company; the name changed to Hughes and Neal. [5] George D. Lombard became the sole proprietor in April 1869, and when he died a year later the firm of George R. Lombard and Company was formed to operate the business. [6]

When George R. Lombard first took charge of the operation in 1870, only 15 workmen were employed in small, poorly equipped quarters. By 1878, 40 people were employed on "the finest machinery in the South." [7] Three thousand pounds of castings were poured a day from iron purchased from the Cherokee Iron Company in northern Georgia. Castings manufactured were sugar rollers and kettles, pumps, iron fronts, and fencing. In addition, railroad, factory and sawmill, mill work, and general repair work kept business brisk and presented opportunities for expansion. [8]

By 1887 the firm employed 125 skilled workmen with annual wages totalling \$41,000, manufacturing \$90,000 worth of products yearly. [9] About this time, the underground flume leading into the wheel pit was uncovered and widened, and a new wheelhouse was built. [10] Fifty horsepower was supplied by the canal for the operation of that day's most modern machinery; auxiliary steam power was available in case of emergency. Special machines for riveting heavy boilers; lathes with a capacity to turn 12-foot diameter pulleys; a powerful hydraulic wheel press for putting on car wheels; special bolt forging and fitting machinery; lathes for turning locomotive driving wheels; trip hammers; and a steam chammer were some of the more exotic machinery in operation. [11]

The principal buildings included a main two-story brick structure (one-story in the rear), 70 x 400 feet; a one-story brick foundry, 50 x 250 feet; a brick blacksmith shop, 30 x 100 feet; a 40x250-foot warehouse with two wings, 40 x 100 feet and 20 x 80 feet; two brick pattern houses, each 30 x 80 feet; and the engine and boiler house, 30 x 40 feet. [12]

Nine departments comprised the iron works: the foundry, machine, boiler, gin shops, blacksmithing, bolt department, brass foundry, pattern shops, and supply store. George R. Lombard and Company directed their efforts to the manufacture, sale, and repair of all kinds of machinery, including engines, boilers, tanks, stacks, saw and cane mills, gins, presses, injectors, pipes, valves, fittings, shafting, pulleys, hangers, and mill work. [13] The company was especially noted for its high-pressure horizontal tubular boilers, the foundry having the

capability to make them of any capacity. A large quantity of equipment and supplies was stored in the warehouses to enable them to ship out orders as soon as they were received.

If his own suppliers were not as sufficient as himself, George R. Lombard would look after the problem personally. When three bridges were under construction and a shipment of structural steel had not arrived, Lombard traveled to Pittsburgh to see what the problem was. As a result of his trip, two train carloads of iron had been received in Augusta by the time he arrived home. [14]

The company experienced further expansion in 1894 when the Pendleton Foundry and Machine Works [15] was acquired (see HAER report). This merger resulted in the incorporation of a new firm, the Lombard Iron Works and Supply Company, on October 15, 1894. [16] During the last two decades of the 19th century and on into the 20th, the plant was considered one of the most complete and extensive of its kind in the country. It was a "boon to the locality and to the South generally" [17] and shipped its products throughout the southern states and to other parts of the country. The firm continued to expand, and by 1910 it was considered one of the most important industrial enterprises in Augusta, employing 300 skilled workers. [18]

The property was gradually covered with new structures and additions to additions; the raceway was covered over to create additional floor space. A rope drive was suspended between a tall tower and the cotton gin machinery storehouse, crossing over a street and several railroad tracks.

The operation of the Lombard Iron Works and Supply Company revolved closely around George R. Lombard, and this created a paternalistic atmosphere within the company. During his many years in the business, Lombard had not trained anyone to succeed him, to make the appropriate decisions, and to operate the works as efficiently and as productively as he had. His death signalled the beginning of the end for the works. His family operated the company for several years until they leased it to three firms during World War II. The third of these firms was operated by Pete Knox, previously of Thompson, Georgia, and his company manufactured, among other things, shell casings, 100-pound general purpose bombs, and rudders. Following the war, Knox desired to purchase the plant, but communication difficulties between members of the Lombard family prevented this, and Clarence Mobley purchased the old Lombard Iron Works and Supply Company. [19]

Mobley operated the works for two years as the Augusta Iron Works, Inc. Three businesses were included in the company: the Augusta Mill Supply Company; Clarence Mobley Contracting Company; and the Augusta Iron Works. In 1948 he sold the latter company to Frank Dennis II, and later he sold the Mill Supply company. Dennis leased the old Iron Works site from Mobley (whose family still owns it today [1977]) and started the uphill climb as the Augusta Iron and Steel Works, Inc.

The profits of the infant firm were plowed back into the company for the replacement of machinery which was antiquated and in poor condition. Use of water power was terminated c. 1950 because of the canal's unreliability and the consequent expense of being on the power

company's "standby list." [20] Different markets were tried to see which would be the most profitable and compatible with the firm's operation. During this time the company manufactured bins, hoppers, tanks, and structural steel for schools and industrial buildings. About 1957 the works started the fabrication of steel for bridges, which has now turned into its major product. A new plant was constructed in Martinez, Georgia, a suburb of Augusta, in 1967, and the old Iron Works structures (many now demolished) were limited to steel fabrication for small projects, its size being the limiting factor. [21]

The various firms which operated foundries and machine shops at this site illustrate the changes which have occurred in the iron foundry industry over the past century. George R. Lombard, starting with two separate small iron works, formed the largest in Georgia. But the age of single multi-faceted iron and machine works and supply companies was over by the mid-20th century. Specialization was required to survive. Frank Dennis ll realized this, and the Augusta Iron and Steel Works became successful as a fabricator of steel for bridges.

Footnotes

1. Augusta City Directory, 1859, p. 34. (Hereafter cited as A.C.D.)
2. Ibid.
3. A.C.D., 1861.
4. A.C.D., 1867.
5. The Augusta Exchange, compiler, The Industrial Advantages of Augusta, Georgia (Augusta: The Akehurst Publishing Co., 1893), pp. 54-6.
6. Ibid.
7. John L. Maxwell, Pleasant A. Stovall, and T. R. Gibson, Handbook of Augusta (Augusta: Chronicle and Constitutionalist Book and Job Printing Est., 1878), pp. 27-8.
8. "All work for the Augusta, Langley, Graniteville and Jewells factories and part for the Enterprise Factory, work for the Georgia Railroad and Port Royal Railroad, the Georgia Chemical Works and all the flour mills in Augusta, is done at Lombard's foundry and machine works..." Maxwell, Handbook of Augusta, p. 28.
9. Augusta Chronicle, 9 October 1887.
10. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps were available from 1884, 1890, 1904, and 1923. Changes in the industry's plant can usually be noted from these.
11. The Augusta Exchange, Industrial Advantages..., pp. 54-6.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Augusta Chronicle, 7 August 1895.
15. See Historic American Engineering Record, Augusta Canal Survey, Report No. 10A, Pendleton and Boardman.
16. The incorporators were George R. Lombard, John G. Van Pelt, George P. Welch, S. A. Kendrist, George F. Broadhurst, John R. Shumate, J. B. Stoughton, and J. G. Belding. Capital stock was set at \$100,000 with the capability to increase to \$500,000. Office of the Richmond County Superior Court clerk, "Incorporations," Book 1, pp. 283-290.

17. The Augusta Exchange, Industrial Advantages, pp. 54-6.
18. Illustrated City of Augusta: The Lowell of the South, c. 1910, p. 12.
19. Interview with Frank Dennis II, president of Augusta Iron and Steel Works, Inc., Augusta, Georgia, 1 September 1977, conducted by Robert C. Jorgensen.
20. Previous to this, two turbines supplied approximately 175 horsepower to operate the machinery. Ibid.
21. Ibid.

Selected Bibliography

The Augusta Exchange, compiler. The Industrial Advantages of Augusta, Georgia. Augusta: The Akehurst Publishing Co., 1893.

Excellent source containing descriptions of the products manufactured and a short history of the previous owners.

Maxwell, John L., Stovall, Pleasant A., and Gibson, T. R. Handbook of Augusta. Augusta: Chronicle and Constitutionalist Book and Job Printing Est., 1878.

Good source on operations of the works in 1878.

Augusta City Directories.

Many of the early years are missing, but those available provide a means of tracing the changes of firm names and operators.

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for 1884, 1890, 1904, and 1923.

Valuable in tracing the physical growth and layout of the industries.

Dennis, Frank. President of Augusta Iron and Steel Works, Inc., Augusta, Georgia. Interview, September 1, 1977.

Hughes, Harry. Retired former employee of Lombard Iron Works and Supply Company, Augusta, Georgia. Interview, July 25, 1977.